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U.S. Senate again stonewalls Pickering

WASHINGTON, D.C. (BP and local reports) — Former Mississippi Baptist Convention President Charles Pickering's beleaguered nomination to the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals finally reached the full U.S. Senate but, as expected, opponents blocked a confirmation vote with the threat of a filibuster.

Senate Republicans sought to break the Democrat-led filibuster Oct. 30, but fell six votes short of the 60 needed to invoke cloture (anti-filibuster measure). The effort to end the delaying tactics resulted in a 54-43 vote. Two Democrats, John Breaux of Louisiana and

Zell Miller of Georgia, and independent Jim Jeffords of Vermont joined 51 Republicans in voting for cloture.

Of the three senators who did not vote, only Democrat Ben Nelson of Nebraska appeared to be a likely vote for cloture, leaving Pickering's supporters at least five votes short of breaking a logjam Democrats seem determined to maintain.

Pickering has served for 12 years as a federal district judge in Hattiesburg. A member of First Church, Laurel, Pickering served two years as president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention in the mid-1980s, in addition to serving on

numerous Mississippi Baptist and Southern Baptists boards and committees. He was also a member of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee in the mid-1980s.

Pickering was initially nominated to the appeals court by President George W. Bush last year before Republicans gained control of the U.S. Senate. That nomination was turned down by the Democrat-majority

Judiciary Committee on a 10-9 straight party vote. He was renominated by the President earlier this year and cleared the Republican-controlled Judiciary Committee on another 10-9 straight party vote.

Democrats led by Senator Charles Schumer of New York accused Pickering of racial and gender insensitivity, and vowed to block a full Senate vote by use of a filibuster during which opposing Senators would deliver open-ended speeches to prevent action on the nomination.

Liberal special-interest groups condemned Pickering's nomination from the beginning and lauded Democrats' attempts to stall the nomination. At least two groups, the National Organization for Women and the National Abortion Rights Action League/Pro-Choice America, specifically cited Pickering's religious activism and personal anti-abortion beliefs as reasons for defeating his nomination to the appeals court.

Pickering became the fourth federal appeals court nominee unable to be freed for confirmation by a cloture vote in this Congress. The others are Miguel Estrada, nominated to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals; Priscilla Owen, a Fifth Circuit nominee; and William Pryor, nominated to the 11th Circuit. After more than two years of waiting for a confirmation vote, Estrada withdrew his name in September.

Gene Henderson, newly-elected president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and pastor of First Church, Brandon, noted Pickering's personal and professional integrity and added, "...the political process has robbed the

American people of the services of a great Christian gentleman and a fair and just judge. Judge Pickering has been characterized as a racist, which is totally untrue."

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson, recalled Pickering's service to Mississippi Baptists over the years and commended his character.

"While I am certainly not in a position to know how to evaluate whether or not a man is highly qualified to be a federal judge, I do

believe that I have a keen sense to evaluate political shenanigans designed not just to derail a judge's appointment, but attack the other political party.

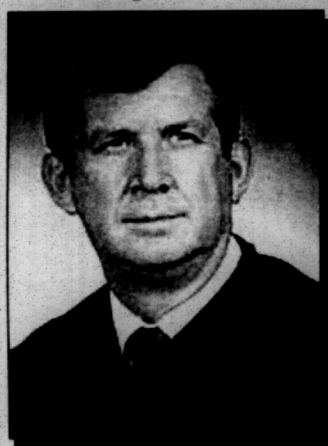
"What I do know is that Charles Pickering has served well and with the highest degree of integrity, whether it has been in state government, in the courts, in church, or in Mississippi Baptist Convention life. It has been strange to see people attack him in the area of reconciliation, for regardless of what the issue was or who was involved, he sought to bring about right relationships. If he loses the vote, we all share in the loss," Futral said.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, called Pickering a "good and brave man" who is the "latest victim of a blatant and unconstitutional politicization of the confirmation process."

"It is clear from the cloture vote that if Judge Pickering's nomination had come up for a vote, he would have been confirmed by a majority of the Senate," Land said. "I hope Southern Baptists who are as outraged as I am by this disgraceful treatment of a fellow Southern Baptist will let their senators who voted against allowing his nomination to come to a floor vote know just how unhappy they are with the way they voted."

Miller said Pickering "has been victimized by inaccurate race-baiting and political trash talk by the news media, members of Congress, and Washington's liberal elite."

The Fifth Circuit, based in New Orleans, hears cases from Mississippi, Texas, and Louisiana.



Pickering

MBCB officers, exec. comm. chosen



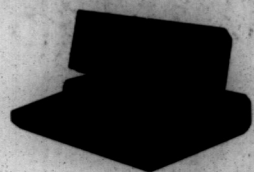
The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) meeting October 29 in the Baptist building in Jackson immediately after the adjournment of the 2003 Mississippi Baptist Convention annual meeting, elected board officers and members of the executive committee for the coming year. New board officers include (from left) Sandra Gunn (At-Large), member of First Church, Biloxi, secretary; Rex Yancy (At-Large), pastor of First Church, Pascagoula, president; and Clarence C. (North Central Association), pastor of Emmanuel Church, Grenada, vice-president. Serving on the executive committee with the new board officers will be:

- Victor Bevan, pastor, Star Church, Star (Rankin Association)
- Carlos Ferral, pastor, First Church, Holly Springs (At-Large)
- Greg Harrison, pastor, First Church, Troy (Pontotoc Association)
- Daniel R. Howard, pastor, First Church, Philadelphia (Neshoba Association)
- Bobby L. Kirk, member, Roundaway Church, Doddsville (At-Large)
- Paul Huff, pastor, Calvary Church, Greenville (Washington Association)
- Danny Lee Pinner, pastor, First Church, Inverness (Mid-Delta Association)
- Gary Richardson, pastor, North Oxford Church, Oxford (At-Large)
- Dale Sawyer, member, First Church, Laurel (At-Large)
- Forrest Sheffield, pastor, Harrisburg Church, Tupelo (Lee Association)
- Bob Simmons, member, Poplar Springs Drive Church, Meridian (At-Large)
- Wayne Van Horn, pastor, First Church, Columbia (At-Large)
- Jimmy E. Williams, pastor, Fellowship Church, Meridian (Lauderdale Association)

Ex-officio

- Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer Miss. Baptist Convention Board, Jackson
- Gene Henderson, MBC president, Brandon

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Out of many, one

The 168th annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) passed into the history books on October 29, as outgoing two-term MBC President Frank Pollard, retired pastor of First Church, Jackson, handed the president's gavel to new leader Gene Henderson, pastor of First Church, Brandon, and declared the meeting adjourned.

It seems that Mississippi Baptists remain intent on providing a model convention for others to emulate, both inside and outside the Southern Baptist Convention. While political factions in other state Baptist conventions wrestle for power and control and diminish themselves in the eyes of a lost world, Mississippi Baptists continue to focus on their ultimate goal of helping to bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus.

Even the presidential election, wracked by infighting and partisanship in so many other state Baptist conventions, is handled differently in Mississippi. Henderson, a longtime Mississippi pastor and strong MBC supporter, was elected to his first presidential term by acclamation.

The 1,413 messengers from Mississippi Baptist churches likewise handled their business matters with dignity and statesmanship. On the few hot-button issues tackled during the 2003 annual meeting, debaters disagreed but were not disagreeable. When ballots were counted and issues settled, messengers again joined in one accord to offer praise and worship to the Lord.

The fact that such behavior is an asset to Mississippi Baptists — and lacking in so many other organizations religious

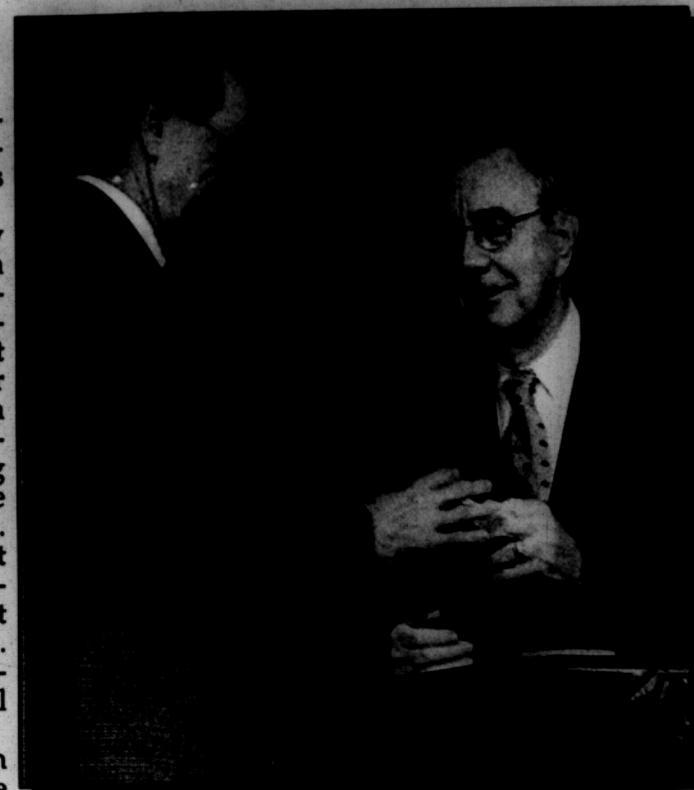
and secular — cannot be overemphasized. We are indeed a fortunate people upon whom God has richly smiled.

A Mississippi pastor recently told of being invited to attend a neighboring state Baptist convention annual meeting in the company of his pastor friend in that state. The Mississippi pastor described walking in the main door of the meeting hall, past several "takeover" groups handing out literature touting their cause and insulting their opposition. He was appalled at the blatant political maneuvering he witnessed, and the harsh words that were spoken among the brethren. Messengers went away disgruntled, and he came home grateful to be a Mississippi Baptist.

God has smiled upon Mississippi Baptists because we have not allowed our ambition to serve Him to devolve into disunity and dissension and distract us from our Great Commission work. God has smiled upon us because we have continued to give sacrificially, of our abundant monetary blessings and also of our time and talents. May it always be so.

May we always be able to handle our disagreements in humility as befitting brothers and sisters in Christ, with fairness and respect for each other's sincerely-held opinions. As the wise old preacher once said, "It's hard to think of yourself as better than someone else, when you're washing their feet." It wouldn't hurt at all if more of us adopted that thought as a way of life.

Now is not the time in the history of the Christian church to allow internal strife to



TRANSFER OF OFFICE — Frank Pollard (right), outgoing president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, hands over the convention gavel October 29 to Gene Henderson, newly-elected president of the convention and pastor of First Church, Brandon. (BR photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

separate us. The Evil One has made deep inroads into so many parts of our world, including America. He is powerful and diabolical, and seeks our surrender every day as he attempts to wear us down. With the planet presently awash in warmongering, paganism, perversion, false doctrine, and personally destructive behavior, we must remain unified against the enemy and unafraid of the battles to come.

Thank you, Mississippi Baptists, for looking like Jesus to a lost world. It's enough to make a Father proud.

GUEST OPINION:



Conventions and county fairs

By Tony Martin, Associate Editor

Having said that, I'm confronted with the reality that since Day One of the Christian church, there has been controversy. Funny how two different parties can see the exact same thing and come up with a different conclusion. In the Pentecost account in Acts 2, a very diverse crowd hears the disciples speaking in different languages, so that all present could hear and understand the Gospel in their native tongue. Those witnesses were astonished and amazed. Yet, others sneered and said, "They're full of new wine!"

A cursory look further in Acts will discover more controversy — over widows being neglected, over circumcision, over whether to accept Paul, etc. Controversy, then, is certainly nothing new — and perhaps not even a bad thing. Here's why: It gives an opportunity for God to be God.

During the convention, some potentially contentious issues

surfaced — over the place of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message, a constitutional amendment concerning who might hold leadership roles in the convention, and other matters. These were presented, dealt with through due process, and votes were cast as necessary. A crass humanistic view to take of these proceedings would show that there were "winners and losers." That is to say, some folks got their way and others didn't.

Let me offer an alternate interpretation. I'd like to suggest that during the convention, there was indeed a winner and loser: God won and Satan lost. Scripture calls Satan "the accuser of the brethren." Satan knows that if he can get us "stirred up" against each other, Kingdom work can flounder and stall. We have to commend our Mississippi Baptist forefathers for structuring our Convention in the fashion in which they did. Through a

logical, systematic way of doing business, issues can be addressed, changes made, and resolutions passed. By doing business decently and in order, we can focus our attention on the real "meat" of the convention — celebrating what God is doing in our state, expressing our thankfulness to Him through worship, and simply enjoying fellowship with each other.

How do I know, then, that God "won"? Because I listened to Mississippi Baptists tell their stories, and heard testimony as to how God was at work. He showed Himself through soaring worship music and compelling preaching. He has been at work meeting needs through entities such as the Baptist Children's Village. He has used Mississippians both domestically and around the world through missions activities and endeavors. He has used our Baptist colleges as venues to educate our students. He has provided every Mississippi Baptist, no matter what their giftedness, opportunities to be involved in what He is doing.

Ashamed to be a Mississippi Baptist? Hardly. The 2003 Convention was better than the fair ever was. If we could just get some vendors to serve up some chicken on a stick, my joy would be complete.

Parents alerted to Wicca teen enticements

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — Magic, even magic associated with witchcraft, has become one of the most popular subjects for teen entertainment in America. Of course, few Christians would condemn the magic of Hans Christian Andersen, C.S. Lewis, or J.R.R. Tolkien. In fact, those writers wrote about magic in a way that reinforced Christian worldview and doctrines.

However, the magic that is such a hot topic today with teenagers is connected with Wicca, a modern witchcraft movement that embraces a revival of ancient pagan traditions. Christian parents today must be aware of this growing phenomenon, because while Wicca does attract adults, the vast majority of new Wiccans become involved as teenagers.

Informal groups of Wiccans called covens have popped up in most cities in the United States. In understanding Wicca, parents should be aware that witchcraft is not harmless fun, but an explicitly anti-Christian worldview and a collection of fundamentally unbiblical practices. Without delving into Wiccan history, here is a summary of Wiccans' beliefs and what parents should know to protect their children from this movement.

WHAT WICCANS BELIEVE

- **Wiccan ethics.** Hexes, curses and black magic surface in any discussion of witchcraft, but modern Wicca claims to promote positive social values, such as peace and good will. Wiccans follow a creed called the Rede which states: "As you harm none, do as you will." Or more simply: "As long as you don't hurt anyone, do what you want." This is different from the satanic creed: "Do what thou wilt is the whole of the law" or "Do whatever you want — period!"

Wiccans also hold to the Law of Return, also called the Law of Three, an idea related to karma: "For good or for ill, shall be returned to us threefold." Again, in plain-speaking terms: "Whatever you do will have consequences for you three times over." While this might seem

close to the Bible's admonition, "A man reaps what he sows" (Galatians 6:7), the big difference is that the consequences come from God's authority. The universe doesn't have to "compensate" for good or bad things we do, but our relationship with God is affected.

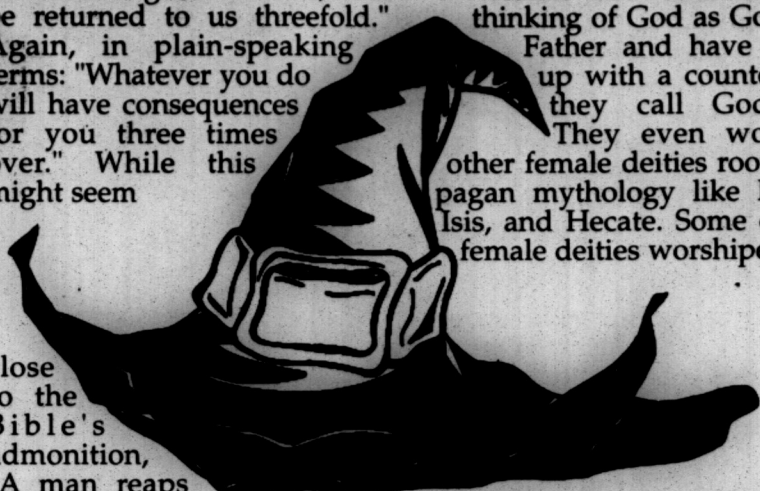
- **Sexual liberation.** No-rules sexuality is a hallmark of Wicca; anything that doesn't harm anyone and is consensual is okay. Wren Walker, one prominent Wiccan, proclaims: "We have no rules which prohibit homosexuality, nudity, or pre-marital sex. Sex as the generative force in nature is seen by most pagans as something utterly sacred." Sexuality is holy, but not in the sense that Wiccans intend.

Christians believe that God created sex as a part of the marriage relationship and the boundaries He placed around it are for our own good, not to prevent people from having a good time or expressing themselves, as detractors might say.

- **Feminism.** Feminists and disaffected women have been drawn to witchcraft throughout history, and Wicca is no exception. The majority of Wiccans today are women. Wiccans have been effective in capitalizing on

what they believe is Christendom's poor track record on the treatment of women.

Wiccans are offended by thinking of God as God the Father and have come up with a counterpart they call Goddess. They even worship other female deities rooted in pagan mythology like Ishtar, Isis, and Hecate. Some of the female deities worshiped by



Wiccans are condemned by name in the Bible.

- **Nature worship.** Wiccans revere nature. They have created an affinity link with ancient druidism and other nature-centric pagan movements. They are concerned with the changing seasons and the cycles of the moon. They are looking for harmony with nature rather than dominion over it. In fact, Wiccans believe that there is a goddess above everything, and there is a goddess in everything.

That means that killing animals for any reason is wrong to many witches. It is common to find witches who are animal rights activists, vegetarians, or environmentalists. One Wiccan claimed arrogantly: "If you take the Christian Bible and put it out in the wind and the rain, soon the paper on which the words are printed will disintegrate and the words will be gone. Our Bible IS the wind and the rain."

- **Satanism and the new age movement.** Calling witches "Satanists" or "devil worshipers" is not accurate because Wiccans do not believe in God or Satan since they reject most traditional Christian teachings. Wiccans would not deny being occultic (having secret, mystical teachings and practices), but they reject the worship of evil, animal sacrifices and anything else associated with harming others.

However, Aleister Crowley (the father of modern Satanism) remains one of the most important influences on "neopagan

magick" — the spelling preferred by Wiccans to set themselves apart. Likewise, the New Age movement holds many tenets in common with witchcraft, yet witches reject many of the practices and beliefs common to New Age practitioners. Wiccans might scoff at spirit-channeling but embrace reincarnation or karma.

SIGNS OF INVOLVEMENT

How can you tell if your teens or their friends are involved in Wicca? Here are some things to watch for:

- **Withdrawal from church.** Some teens may want to skip church in favor of an "alternative meeting," possibly in a home or even another church.

Record

Some Wiccan groups are affiliated with Unitarian Universalists.

- **Internet networking with Wiccans.** The Internet revolution means that people who would never be able to meet are able to create relationships. Wiccans have mastered this, so monitor your teenagers' participation in suspicious chat rooms, instant message buddies, e-mail newsletters, and websites.

- **Dress and appearance.** Wiccan teens often wear black or "natural colors" like dark green and brown. They also may wear silver jewelry like necklaces and earrings with occult symbols like pentagrams or goats' heads. They also may want tattoos with mystical symbols, especially Celtic patterns.

- **Reading habits.** Books for teens on witchcraft are very popular — not just fiction, but how-to guides like the Book of Shadows, A Witch's Bible, and even the Complete Idiot's Guide to Wicca and Witchcraft.

The author of this article, William G. Wells, is a writer based in Richardson, Texas. Reprinted with permission from On Mission magazine, a publication of the North American Mission Board.

Looking back

10 years ago

Outcries by Mexican moral crusaders over concerts by Madonna and Michael Jackson in Mexico City have little impact on young people — even young Christians, according to a Southern Baptist observer.

20 years ago

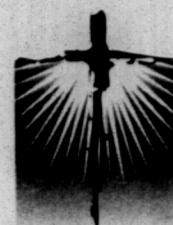
Incorporating two earlier cases involving a number of publication and broadcast media against the Mississippi Tax Commission and the city of Oxford, the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals votes 8 - 5 to continue a ban on liquor and wine advertising within the state.

50 years ago

W.G. Mize, superintendent of the Baptist Orphanage in Jackson, states that the railroads in the state are providing free transportation for all supplies and gifts shipped to the orphanage during the holiday season, from November 16 through December 31.

Video game blamed

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A group of Tennessee families has filed a \$10 million lawsuit against the makers of the popular video game Grand Theft Auto III, Sony Corporation of America, and Wal-Mart, alleging that the game inspired two teenage boys to fatally shoot one motorist and seriously wound another. The shooters, stepbrothers William Buckner, age 16, and Joshua Buckner, age 14, of Newport, Tenn., reportedly told police they wanted to shoot into traffic along Tennessee's Interstate 40 just as they shot at moving cars while playing Grand Theft Auto III. The boys pled guilty in juvenile court to reckless homicide, endangerment and assault, and were sentenced in August to an indefinite term in state custody. Aaron Hamel, age 45, of Knoxville, Tenn., was killed and Kimberly Bede, age 19, of Moneta, Va., was seriously wounded when the Buckners took rifles from their home and fired 22-caliber bullets into traffic 40 miles east of Knoxville. Grand Theft Auto maker Take-Two, which has sold more than 25 million copies of the game, told TechNewsWorld in a statement that the lawsuit is "without merit" and "similar to lawsuits brought and uniformly dismissed by courts in other jurisdictions." Both Sony and Wal-Mart have declined to comment on the pending litigation. The Entertainment Software Association (ESA), however, called the shooting "an unspeakable tragedy" but said that there is no evidence to suggest that violent games lead to violent behavior. James Parker, professor of worldview and culture at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said the Grand Theft Auto case highlights the need for government to allow free speech but simultaneously restrict speech that incites criminal action.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

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2003 YEC slated for Dec. 29-30 in Clinton

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

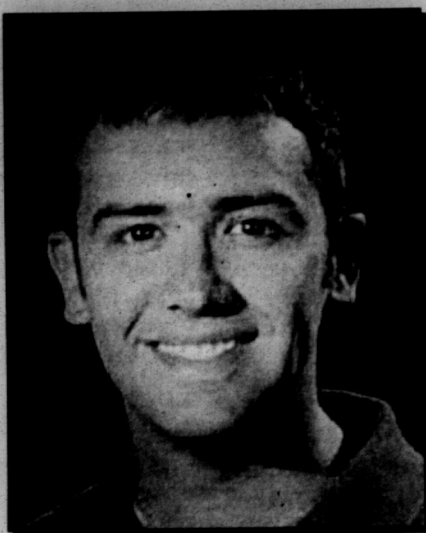
The 2003 Mississippi Youth Evangelism Conference (YEC) December 29-30 on the campus of Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton and First Church, Clinton, will feature youth evangelists Adam Robinson and Landon Dowden, along with the music of Christian pop group By the Tree.

The annual event is sponsored by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) Evangelism Department and funded by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program. Coordinators are Jay Fletcher, youth minister at First Church, Clinton, and Shannon Slover, youth minister at First Church, Laurel.

"I think our state is very excited about this year's conference. I have received at least 20 phone calls over the last couple of weeks wanting more information about the conference. Ninety-five percent of those calls have been from churches

that have never attended the conference before or have not been to the conference in the last five years," said Fletcher.

Featured speaker Adam Robinson is a youth evangelist from Birmingham. He is a popular speaker at youth conferences and youth nights around the Southern Baptist Convention. He has worked extensively with the Centrifuge and Student Life programs.



Robinson

Featured speaker Landon Dowden is a contemporary youth evangelist from River Ridge, La. He is currently enrolled in the doctoral degree program at New Orleans Seminary and has also been a featured speaker for the Centrifuge program.

By the Tree is a Christian contemporary group that owns two Dove Awards and has just released its third CD, Root. Other CDs include These Days and Invade My Soul. The band was tapped as one of the top ten new artists of 2001 by Soundscan.

"Last year we had space problems; I guess that's a great



By the Tree

problem to have. We've solved those problems and are prepared to have even more students this year. We are separating the ninth and tenth grades this year and giving them their own separate leaders.

"We are also going to honor the request of many adults over the past several years in beginning a breakout group just for them. We wanted the leader of the adult group to be a Mississippi Baptist pastor, and we are honored this year to have Daniel Hall, pastor of First Church, Crystal Springs, leading our adults," Fletcher said.

Registration will begin at noon on December 29. A youth ministers/counselors meeting will be held at 1:15 p.m. in the MC Field House, prior to the 2 p.m. start of Session One. The conference will dismiss at 3:30 p.m. on December 30.

"Last year's conference was one of the best, but I believe this year's conference is going to be the best ever. Adam Robinson and Landon Dowden are gifted communicators of the Gospel of Christ — as gifted as anyone we have ever had. They are dynamic and get straight to the point, and our students responded so well to them last year.

"We are also going to bring the concert back this year. I have heard from many students and youth ministers about their desire to have the concert back. We are fortunate to have By the Tree leading us in worship during the conference and leading us in the concert during the Tuesday

morning session. These guys are awesome and are quickly making a name for themselves in the Christian music industry," Fletcher said.

Fletcher also pointed to a change for this year's conference. "Don't be afraid of the new name that you see on the promotional poster. It's still the Mississippi Baptist Youth Evangelism Conference. The committee added the word 'Challenge' just to put an emphasis on what we want to

do every year with this conference — challenge our students to share their faith openly with a lost generation," he said.

Admission is \$10 per person if pre-registered with the MBCB Evangelism Department, and \$15 per person at the door. Pre-regis-

tration deadline is December 19. To pre-register or for more information, contact the MBCB Evangelism Department at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3278 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 278. E-mail: jellis@mbcb.org.

Plenary sessions will be held in the A.E. Wood Coliseum on the MC campus, with breakout sessions at various locations around the MC campus and at First Church, Clinton. Organizers strongly recommend that individuals and church groups allow plenty of time for parking and access to the coliseum before the start of the program each day. A capacity crowd is expected.



Dowden

2003 Mississippi Baptist Youth Evangelism Conference December 29-30 — Mississippi College, Clinton Schedule of Events

DECEMBER 29 AFTERNOON SESSION

12 Noon - Registration begins
1:15 p.m. - Youth ministers/counselors meeting (Field House)
2 p.m. - Session 1
Worship: By the Tree
Speaker: Adam Robinson
4 p.m. - Dismiss for supper on your own

DECEMBER 29 EVENING SESSION

6:30 p.m. - Breakout Groups
7:30 p.m. - Session 2
8 p.m. - Session 2: Evangelistic Service
Worship: By the Tree
Speaker: Landon Dowden
10 p.m. - Dismiss for evening

DECEMBER 30 MORNING SESSION

8:45 a.m. - Breakout Groups
9:45 a.m. - Break Time
10 a.m. - Session 3
Concert: By the Tree
Speaker: Adam Robinson
11 a.m. - Dismiss for lunch on your own

DECEMBER 30 AFTERNOON SESSION

1:15 p.m. - Breakout Groups
2:30 p.m. - Session 4
Worship: By the Tree
Speaker: Adam Robinson
3:30 p.m. - Dismiss for home

BREAKOUT GROUPS:

7th and 8th grades
Speaker: James Jackson
First Church, Clinton
New Sanctuary

9th grade
Speaker: Gary Permenter
Alumni Hall Gym, MC

10th grade
Speaker: Landon Dowden
Swor Auditorium, MC

11th and 12th grade
Speaker: Adam Robinson
Grand Hall, MC Student Union
(above MC cafeteria)

Adults
Speaker: Daniel Hall
First Church, Clinton
Old Sanctuary

Have you seen some of the ways that investigators have gone about finding who the September 11th terrorists were and discovering who some of their accomplices were? One of the things they did was to immediately confiscate all of the tapes from banks, stores, and public places where surveillance cameras were trained on people as they came and went, and on many people as they just passed by. They said that on the average if you are out in public you will be photographed about 12 times a day and most of the time, you don't even know it! Think about it — 12 times, every day, something or somebody is snapping your picture! Whether at school, the grocery store, the bank, the Baptist Building, the convenience store, and even some churches, your actions and activities are being recorded.

For most people, even if we know it, we get used to it. We don't even think about it and just go on about our activities without it ever crossing our minds. Those devices are put there for one purpose — to catch wrong doers! And, they work! If you think about it,



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

there are probably thousands of people photographed who are not doing anything wrong — not stealing, destroying, shooting, or harming anyone. Although they are under surveillance, it makes no difference. Yet, one lawbreaker comes through and can have the rest of his life changed by a picture.

Do they not know these cameras are everywhere or do they just think that they are invisible? Do these cameras serve as any kind of deterrent to their actions? I honestly don't know. What I do know is that before there were any cameras there was and is the far more accurate, "all-seeing eye of God." He not only sees and knows where we are and what we are doing, but He even knows what we are thinking and is fully aware of our motives. I suppose it is right

there that God's camera is most revealing. How many times do we do things that can appear to be worthwhile, good for other folks, and a blessing to God Himself, when the truth is that the unseen, underlying motive is self-serving?

We may sing a song to the glory of God when, in fact, we desire the glory for ourselves. We may preach a sermon appearing to defend the principles of God, when in fact we just want to get folks told off. We may attend church with the appearance of being deeply religious and wanting to meet with God when, in fact, we are just nosy and want to know what the preacher is saying that Sunday so we can criticize him.

He holds the whole world in His hand. The Scripture says in John 1:3, "Through him all things were made;

without him nothing was made that has been made." In a fall edition of National Geographic magazine there was an article about the Hubbell telescope, that powerful lens that sees what nobody has ever seen before, that hangs out in space. The article told about how the scientists turned the Hubbell telescope towards the darkest spot in the sky. That would be like training the telescope on a grain of sand held at arm's length. They focused in and took pictures of that dark, dark spot. When the pictures came in, they blew them up and that little small area, like a grain of sand held at arm's length, began to reveal not one star, not a dozen stars, not a hundred stars, but millions of stars that went on and on filling the expanse of that dark spot in space.

Now, for God there are no dark spots! All we do and all the secret thoughts and hidden acts of life are known to Him! Hebrews 4:13 states, "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." God is watching!



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

Committee delivers amendment report to convention

Following is a partial transcript of the report delivered to the 2003 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention on October 28 by Rick Courtney, chairman of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Constitution and Bylaws Committee and a messenger from First Church, Madison. The portion of Courtney's report presented below deals with a motion to amend the convention's constitution that was made during the 2002 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. In accordance with the convention constitution's amendment procedures, the motion was referred to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee for action at the convention's 2003 annual meeting.

During last year's Convention a motion was brought that would have required amendment of one or more of the organizational documents of the convention, and there are three of those in case you don't know: the Constitution, the Plan of Organization and Action, and the Bylaws, three separate documents that are foundation of what the convention does. That motion has been reprinted in the Convention's Annual and in The Baptist Record in accordance with the Convention's procedures and constitutional amendment procedures. Also for reference, the motion is included in your first day bulletin, a copy of which everyone should have received today. Please refer to the back page of the bulletin at this point. In addition to the motion that was made last year and which is before us today, you will note the amendment procedures that are listed in the box on the right-hand side of the page. The Constitution and Bylaws Committee has carefully studied the proposed motion. We have spent numerous hours over the course of months seeking God's direction and wisdom as we formulated our report and recommendation back to you. I am pleased to share with you that the committee is unanimous in its recommendation. I want to publicly thank each of those committee members for all their input, their insights, and their effort. The Committee has concluded that it would be inappropriate for the Constitution and the Plan of Organization and Action and the Bylaws to focus restrictions on any particular non-Convention organization.

Therefore it is the recommendation of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee that you vote against the motion as presented. As part of our report, I offer the following thoughts for your consideration before the motion is brought up for a vote.

As we analyzed the motion, the Committee sought to keep the desires and the best interests of the Convention at the front of our thought process. As a Committee we serve at the pleasure of this Convention. We recognize that the responsibility to address any motion that would affect or change the Constitution, Plan of Organization and Action, or Bylaws of the Convention is a serious matter and one that deserves serious thoughtful attention.

One question related to the motion at hand is that of enforcement. If this motion were adopted, what is the implementation process and who would be the enforcer of that motion for the Convention? There must be an enforceable method available to support the proposed motion. As a Committee we sought similar practices and policies throughout the Southern Baptist Convention with the intention of analyzing their method of enforcement. We were unable to find any policy that resembles the motion at hand. This search included the State Baptist Conventions as well as the Southern Baptist Convention.

The motion addresses positions of leadership for those in elected, employed, or appointed positions of leadership with this Convention. As to the employment issue, we agree that employees of the Mississippi Baptist Convention should serve those who employ them. We believe that the ability to employ personnel should continue to rest with the individual institutions of the Convention. Along those lines, the Committee believes that every institution should, as a matter of policy, require criteria for their employees to work for one of the Convention entities. For example, the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board's personnel policy, covering all employees of the Convention Board, reads as follows, and I quote:

"All employees of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board shall give priority commitment to their job assignments at the Board. MBCB employees are supported by church offerings given to the Lord through the Cooperative Program. MBCB employees, by nature of their employment, have a duty of fidelity, loyalty and, in some instances, a fiduciary responsibility to the Board. Based on these responsibilities, employees shall not participate or serve in any capacity with any group or engage in any activity that contradicts, is antithetical to, or in any way reflects in a negative and/or adverse manner on the

mission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. Employees are representatives of the Convention Board and are to conduct themselves at work and in their private lives in an exemplary manner."

End of quote. Now the issues related to "elected" positions deal directly with the process entrusted to this Convention on an annual basis. Any action that limits this Convention's ability to nominate and elect who will serve as officers would contradict the Convention's ability to direct its own course of action in those elections. One of the concerns relates to the screening of nominations from the floor of the Convention, such as is the case with officers, and we've seen some nominations and seconds just here a moment ago. The current process of a nomination by a duly elected messenger, a second by a duly elected messenger, and the respective character testimonies has served the Convention well, in our committee's opinion, has served the convention well in the past and we believe will continue to serve the Convention in the future, in that each annual Convention can nominate and elect those whom it chooses.

Again it is the recommendation of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee that you vote against this motion and vote no on the ballot that will be given to you, just to clarify. If that is the will of the Convention, the Committee is prepared to make a recommendation that would amend the Convention's Bylaws on a bit broader scale in an effort to carry out the purpose and essence we found in the motion. I hope that I will be able to make that recommendation to you during the next business session to follow this afternoon. This will not be a substitute or an amendment of the current motion but a separate motion from our committee that will address the commitment of fidelity and loyalty expected of all trustees, board members, committee members, and commission members from all of the entities of the Convention.

Convention messengers voted by paper ballot against the motion by a margin of 572 (66%) — 376 (34%). On the afternoon of October 28, Courtney presented the Constitution and Bylaws Committee's separate proposal to amend the convention's Bylaws, and messengers approved it on the morning of October 29. The Bylaw amendment covers nominees to positions of leadership in the Mississippi Baptist Convention and closely tracks the convention board's employee policy as quoted by Courtney.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



Don Orr, Kent Blaine, and Randy Sutton

Vaiden Church, Vaiden, held a deacon ordination on September 28. Pictured (from left) are Don Orr, Kent Blaine, and Randy Sutton. Leon Holly, pastor, is standing in the pulpit.

Midway Church, Jackson, ordained Elton Smith as a deacon on September 28. Pictured (from left) are Charles Gentry, pastor, and Elton Smith.

Goss Church, Columbia, will host Paul Ott Carruth, host of the television and radio show Listen to the Eagle, sharing a program, God, Family, and Country, November 13 at 7 p.m. All are welcome. Admission is free and a love offering will be taken. For more information, call (601) 736-9563. Mark McArthur is pastor.

Parkway Church, Houston, and Wright-Track Ministries are



Charles Gentry and Elton Smith

sponsoring a Regional Sunday School Conference with Noel Wright November 11 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at Parkway. Topics include 24 Reasons Why Most Sunday Schools are in Decline, How to Discover Prospects, and The Key to Building an Evangelistic Sunday School. The cost is \$26. Call (662) 456-2745 or (662) 448-4715 from 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. to register.

Pearson Church, Pearl, will hold Gospel Fest featuring Next Generation November 8 at 6 p.m. Admission is free. A love offering will be taken. A chicken strip dinner will be at 4:30 p.m. For more information, call (601) 939-3618.

Victory Church, Bassfield, ordained Kerby Evans and Travis Lee as deacons on September 21. Pictured (from left) are Lee, Hal Bullock, and Evans. Charles Broome is pastor.

West McComb Church, McComb, ordained Kyle Bass as deacon October 12. Pictured (from left) are Odus Jackson, interim pastor, and Bass.

North Columbia Church, Columbia, ordained Dewitt Davis into the ministry on September 28. Davis is available for pulpit supply, pastorate, or interim pastorate. He can be reached at (601) 736-6310. Pictured (from left) are Mike Grenn, pastor, Davis, and his wife Ann.



Travis Lee, Hal Bullock, and Kerby Evans



Odus Jackson and Kyle Bass



Mike Grenn, Dewitt and Ann Davis

Jimmy Boyd recently presented Mattie Lee Williams with her 20 year Sunday School pin at Locust Hill Church, Pontotoc.

Staff Changes

Tommy Davis, Laurel, recently accepted the call of pastor at Hebron Church, Soso. Davis is a graduate of William Carey College and New Orleans Theological Seminary. He was formerly associate pastor of First Church, Soso.

Ashland Church, Ashland, called Randy L. Crews, Sr. as pastor effective October 5. Crews previously served at First Church, Rutherford, Tenn.



Crews

Homecoming & Revival Dates

Bethlehem, Pinola: Homecoming Nov. 9; cemetery day; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch will follow; Marvin Cox, former pastor, preaching.

Horseshoe, Tchula: Homecoming Nov. 9; worship, 10:45 a.m.; lunch will follow; Perry Irvin, preaching; all are welcome.

Bellevue, Hattiesburg: Homecoming Nov. 9, 10:15 p.m. Doug Benedict, guest speaker. Joe Clark, guest minister of music. Noon meal served.

Beacon, Hattiesburg: Revival

Nov. 11-14; nightly, 7 p.m.; Don Savell, Union, speaking; L.D. Miley, music; for more information, call (601) 264-4954.

Coila, Coila: Revival Nov. 9-12; Sunday, 11 a.m., lunch will follow, afternoon singing; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Melvin Mordecai, Starkville, evangelist; Promised, music; Billy Blakely, pastor; all are welcome.

Sturgis, Sturgis: Revival Nov. 9-12; Sunday, 6 p.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m.; Paul Blanchard, Winston County Association, preaching; Archie Chesser, leading worship; all are invited; Russell Mord, pastor.

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